

REMARKS

This application has been amended so as to place it in condition for allowance at the time of the next Official Action.

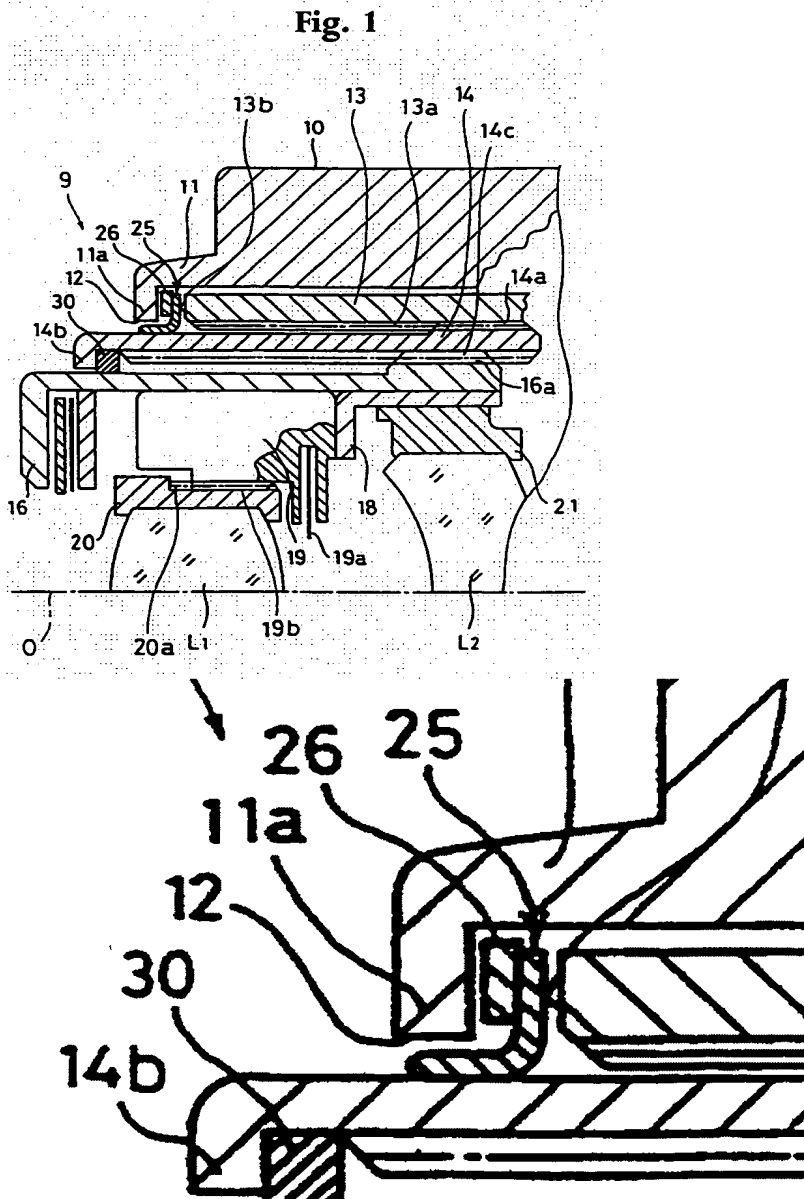
The Official Action objects to claim 25 based on language that is identified as informal. While applicant believes that the original language of such claim accurately reflects the intended meaning, applicant has nevertheless amended claim 25 to recite the flare stopper and the lens element that deforms the flare stopper in a manner that should overcome the objection. Reconsideration and withdrawal of the objection are therefore respectfully requested.

The Official Action rejects claims 6 and 24 under 35 USC §103(a) as being unpatentable over AZAMI et al. in view of KOHMOTO. Reconsideration and withdrawal of this rejection are respectfully requested for the following reasons:

The Official Action identifies those recited features that are considered to read on components of the AZAMI et al. device. The Official Action acknowledges that the use of a light-intercepting element wherein the intersection of the light-intercepting element is made as a side surface having a truncated cone is absent from the primary reference. It is for this teaching that the secondary KOHMOTO reference is offered.

In supporting the rejection, the Official Action explicitly identifies light-intercepting element 25 as the recited flare stopper. Among the features recited in connection

with the flare stopper and attributed by the Official Action to element 25 is a curved section having a shape of a side face of a circular truncated cone inclined to the optical axis of the taking lens system. For purposes of analysis, applicant has reproduced below Figure 1 of the KOHMOTO reference and an enlarged section illustrating element 25.



As described in columns 3 and 4 of KOHMOTO, the annular light intercepting member 25 is made of an elastic material. The inner diameter of the annular light intercepting member 25 is set so that, in its free state, it is smaller than the outer diameter of the movable lens barrel 14 that the light intercepting element 25 will surround. In this way, when the lens barrel 14 is forced through the somewhat smaller opening, the innermost portion of the light intercepting member 25 will be bent into the shape illustrated in Figure 1, with the inward directed face of the light intercepting member in close contact with the outer surface of the lens barrel 14 to establish a light-tight contact.

The KOHMOTO reference offers no indication whatsoever that there is any change in the composition of the light intercepting member 25 from its outermost limit to its innermost limit when considered in its free state as illustrated in Figure 2. When finally assembled, the overall shape of the element 25 is therefore defined by the upper portion secured to base member 26 and the lower portion held in tight contact with the outer surface of lens barrel 14 by tension.

Therefore, considering the cross sectional view as illustrated in Figure 1, one can consider the light intercepting element to have a straight, upper, vertical section and a straight, lower, horizontal section. These two straight sections are interconnected by the unsupported portion of the elastic

member lying therebetween. As the light intercepting member is specifically described as being made of elastic material, this intermediate portion necessarily assumes an arcuate shape tangential at an upper limit to the straight, upper, vertical section and at its lower limit tangential to the straight, lower, horizontal section.

As has been the case throughout the present prosecution in which the KOHMOTO reference has been offered for the circular truncated cone feature, applicant remains at a loss to understand how element 25 can be interpreted as having such a shape at any portion thereof.

Considering the straight, upper, vertical section of element 25, the element may be considered to have an annular shape such as that of a washer. Considering the straight, lower, horizontal section only, the element 25 can be considered to have a different annular shape describing a cylinder.

Neither these nor any other component of the element 25 can reasonably be described as a cone, which is understood to be a solid object obtained by rotating a right triangle around one of its two short sides. A truncated cone is known to be a cone with its apex cut off by a plane parallel to its base. If there were any component of the element 25 that corresponded to the side face of a truncated cone, it would appear in the cross section of Figure 1 as a straight portion lying oblique to the optical axis, neither parallel nor perpendicular to the optical

axis. If the curved portion of element 25 represents the side face of any geometric figure, it is at best a truncated hyperboloid. However, it can in no way be reasonably interpreted as the side face of a truncated cone.

For all these reasons, applicant respectfully suggests that the present obviousness rejection based on the KOHMOTO reference for teaching the recited shape of the element in question cannot reasonably be maintained.

The Official Action separately rejects the following sets of claims under 35 USC §103(a) as unpatentable over the identified references: claims 8-12 and 21 over AZAMI et al. in view of KOHMOTO, and further in view of the prior art admitted by the applicant described on page 1 of the present specification; claims 6, 7, 13, and 22 over KUDO et al. in view of KOHMOTO; and claims 8-11, 21, and 24 over KUDO et al. in view of KOHMOTO, and further in view of the admitted prior art. In each of these rejections, the KOHMOTO reference is relied upon for its teaching or suggestion of the shape of the recited component as being that of a side face of a circular truncated cone. Accordingly, the analysis offered above in connection with the first claim rejection applies no less to the remaining rejections.

The Official Action makes of record, but makes no reference whatsoever to, U.S. Patent No. 6,392,825 to TRUNZ et al. Applicant notes that the TRUNZ et al. device mounts the lens 7 to the membrane ring 4, while the present device is directed to

a flare stopper 31, which does not have the function of holding a lens. Therefore, since the membrane ring 4 of the cited reference and the flare stopper 31 of the present invention are different members having different functions, the TRUNZ et al. reference appears to offer nothing that affects the allowability of the present claims.

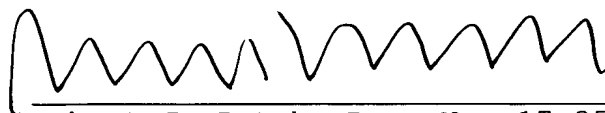
In light of the amendments presented above and the arguments offered in support thereof, applicant believes that the present application is in condition for allowance and an early indication of the same is respectfully requested.

If the Examiner has any questions or requires further clarification of any of the above points, the Examiner may contact the undersigned attorney so that this application may continue to be expeditiously advanced.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies, to charge payment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 25-0120 for any additional fees required under 37 C.F.R. § 1.16 or under 37 C.F.R. § 1.17.

Respectfully submitted,

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